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"SOME BRITISH DRAWINGS"

SUGGESTED PRESS RELEASE:

A group of over 60 British drawings in a variety of techniques and styles has been loaned to The American Federation of Arts by Sir Robert Witt, famous London collector. The collection will be on view at _____ from _____ to _____. It will also be presented in Toledo, Ohio; Kansas City, Missouri; Baltimore, Maryland; Worcester, Massachusetts; Brunswick, Maine; Hartford, Connecticut; and Cleveland, Ohio.

These drawings represent but a portion of the notable collection belonging to Sir Robert Witt. In the catalog to the exhibition, with its useful biographical sketches of the contributing artists, Sir Robert states:

"Everywhere the interest in drawings, as distinct from pictures, is increasing, not only among collectors but among art-lovers generally. For they are modest in size, and therefore easy to transport and to show, modest in cost and therefore easy for the collector to secure.

"At the same time, they are incomparably rich in their variety of subject, approach and technique, covering almost all aspects of everyday life. Landscapes and seascapes, portraits, domestic genre, family life, sport, historic events, caricatures, animals -- all these and many others find their place and make their appeal.

"So too, we may find among them the artist's hasty note or record, his first idea for a picture, his preliminary sketch, his careful study, his finished work of art for its own sake.

"Again, among the mediums he uses, water-colour, black and coloured chalk, pencil, pen and pastel are all to be found. ...

"If...everyone can find here at least something that seems human, amusing, familiar, novel, exciting or puzzling -- it will accord with my own experience, which has been a happy one."

The exhibition of British drawings provides just that, a happy experience in a field too often ignored by the modern gallery visitor in favor of more spectacular works. For in drawings, as so clearly evident in this collection, he can find excitement in the more personal side of art.

To the art lover knowing only the famous paintings of Gainsborough, the equally charming pen and wash drawing "Three Cows Standing in Front of a Group of Trees" to be seen in this exhibition, must bring home to him, with perhaps greater clarity, this artist's ability to organize a complicated subject in simple, dramatic fashion.

From the brush of the famous painter of "The Fighting Tenaire", Joseph Mallord William Turner, the exhibition shows "Dover," a watercolor.

Among the "British" drawings are two by the Americans John Copley and Benjamin West, each represented with a historical subject, for which these Americans, who loom so large in the history of English painting, had become famous. It was Copley who became one of the founders of the Royal Academy.

Lady Hamilton appears in a Romney masterpiece, a pen drawing "Lady Hamilton Consulting a Fortune Teller"

Of great interest is the paradoxical watercolor, "Study of a Specimen of Mineral -- Australian Opal in the Matrix," whose subject matter evokes the naturalistic, "scientific" aura of the 19th century, painted by the great English art critic of that century, John Ruskin. It was Ruskin who shaped the artistic tastes of one of the most important eras in the development of occidental art.

"Trilby"'s author, George du Maurier, is represented by a pen drawing, "The Child of the Period." The animal painter Landseer contributes a chalk "Four Studies of Lions' Heads."

The English have a long tradition of the wryly humorous pictorial commentary on the foibles of their daily life. The great caricaturist Rowlandson and his contemporary Isaac Cruikshank here illustrate this phase of British art with several

watercolors. Also represented is the younger son of Isaac Cruikshank, the famous George, popular both as political cartoonist and illustrator of "Grimm's Fairy Tales."

"The Goose and the Frogs at Table," a watercolor by the children's writer and illustrator whose nom-de-plume was Alfred Crowquill, is in the tradition of the English illustrators of the 19th century, whose influence on our own illustration for children is still so much in evidence.

Among the lesser known but no less interesting artists is Paul Sandby, whose watercolor "A Fortified Sea-Port, with Figures" (here illustrated) typifies the casual mastery of the medium and the charm evident throughout this exhibition.